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FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4308
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK 3738
CINCPAC FOR POLAD
AMCONSUL DANANG 701
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE 2122

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 2741

REF: SAIGON 2601

SUBJ: "ALL VIET-NAM BLOC" CONVENTION

1. ALL VIET-NAM BLOC HELD SECOND AND FINAL SESSION OF ITS "CONVENTION" MORNING AND AFTERNOON EUGUST 9. MAJOR ISSUE CONFRONTING DELEGATES WAS QUESTION OF BLOC SUPPORT

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FOR UPPER HOUSE SLATES. THERE WAS APPARENTLY NO DOUBT THAT BLOC WOULD SUPPORT THE THREE "PALM TREE" SLATES (32, 33 AND 34), BUT DELEGATES DIFFERED ON MANNER IN WHIC THAT SUPPORT SHOULD BE EXPRESSED. SOME DELEGATES WANTED BLOC TO ISSUE A PUBLIC STATEMENT ENDORSING THE THREE SLATES, WHILE OTHERS ARGUED THAT SUCH AN ENDORSEMENT COULD SOMEHOW BE CONSTRUCTED AS A VIOLATION OF THE ELECTION LAW. TRAN VAN AN SUGGESTED THAT CONVENTION DRAFT AN INTERNAL RESO-

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LUTION, WHICH WOULD NOT BE PUBLISHED, ENDORSING THE THREE
LISTS. (PRESS REPORTED THAT HOA HAO DELEGATES WANTED PUBLIC ENDORSEMENT OF UPPER HOUSE SLATES WHILE NON-HOA HAO PREFERRED A MORE EQUIVOCAL POSTURE. HOWEVER, NGUYEN LONG, WHO IS MOST ACTIVE HOA HAO PARTICIPANT IN CONVENTION, TOLD DELEGATES IN AUGUST 9 SESSION THAT DIRECT STATEMENT OF BLOC SUPPORT WOULD HURT RATHER THAN HELP THE THREE SLATES.)

2. AN ADDITIONAL COMPLICATION FOR CONVENTION WAS HOA HAO RELUCTANCE TO OFFICIALLY ALIGN THEMSELVES, AS A

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GROUP, TO ALL VIET-NAM BLOC. HOA HAO DELEGATES (MANY OF WHOM ARE REPORTEDLY MEMBERS OF LOCAL AND PROVINCIAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEES OF HOA HAO CHURCH ORLANIZATION) CAUTIONED THAT CHURCH STATUTE PROHIBITS ANY ORGANIZATIONAL INVOLVEMENT IN POLITICS.

3. CONVENTION FINALLY ADOPTED A TWO-POINT COMMUNIQUE RESOLVING BOTH OF ABOVE PROBLEMS. COMMUNIQUE STATES THAT CONVENTION "APPROVES ESTABLISHMENT OF ALL VIET-NAM BLOC TO EFFECTIVELY ACHIEVE NATIONAL UNITY." IT NOTES, HOWEVER, THAT "HOA HAO DELEGATES OF WESTERN REGION, BECAUSE OF INTERNAL CHURCH REGULATIONS," DO NOT PARTICIPATE IN BLOC'S POLITICAL ORGANIZATION. HOWEVER, AS CITIZENS, THEY AFFIRM THEIR ADHERENCE TO AIMS OF BLOC.

4. SECOND PART OF COMMUNIQUE STATES THAT BLOC RESOLVES TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF UPPER AND LOWER HOUSE ELECTIONS TO ACHIEVE ITS GOALS, AND IS DETERMINED TO SUPPORT AND CAMPAIGN FOR "THOSE UPPER HOUSE AND LLOWER HOUSE CANDI-

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DATES WHOSE POLICIES ARE COMPATIZLE WITH AIMS OE BLOC."

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5. AFTERNOON AUGUST 9 DELEGATES DISCUSSED CAMPAIGN PROCEDURES AND TACTICS. DELEGATES WERE TOLD THAT UPPER HOUSE CAMPAIGN EFFORTS WOULD BE CONCENTRATED IN AREAS WHERE COMPONENT GROUPS OF THE BLOC HAVE THEIR MAIN STRENGTH (I.E. HOA HAO PROVINCES OF THE DELTA, ETC.). THEY WERE REMINDED THAT VOLTERS SHOULD BE INSTRUCTED TO CAST ONLY THREE BALLOTS RATHER THAN UP TO SIX.

6. CONVENTION DISCUSSED PRELIMINARY DRAFT OF BLOC REGULATIONS, AND DECIDED THAT BLOC'S [redacted] UPPER HOUSE CANDIDATES WILL CONSTITUTE AN "ELECTION CAMPAIGN COMMITTEE" FOR LOWER HOUSE ELECTION. DELEGATES ALSO ELECTED A "LIMITED CENTRAL COORDINATING COMMITTEE." (NGUYEN LONG REGRETTED THAT HOA HAO DELEGATES COULD NOT VOTE IN THESE "INTERNAL MATTERS" OF BLOC.) RESPONSIBLILITIES OS CENTRAL COORDINATING COMMITTEE WILL BE TO 1) SEEK LEGAL RECOGNITION OF BLOC, 2) COORDINATE BLC ACTIVITIES IN SUPPORT OF CANDIDATES, 3) DRAFT CHARTER OF BLOC AND REVISE INTERNAL REGULATIONS, AND 4) PLAN SECOND NATIONAL CONVENTION. TRAN VAN AN WAS ELECTED CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE. VICE-CHAIRMEN ARE NGUYEN HOANG OF DALAT AND NGUYEN THE THAC OF TAY NINH. HO VAN DONG IS SECRETARY-GENERAL. IN BRIEF AICEPTANCE SPEECH TRAN VAN AN THANKED DELEGATES FOR THEIR SUPPORT AND PROMISED TO EMULATE "DETERMINATION AND SPIRIT OF LOVE OF HUYNH PHU SO AND PHAM CONG TAC" IN HIS SERVICE TO ALL VIET-NAM BLOC.

7. COMMENT: CONVENTION WAS NOT PARTICULARLY AUSPICIOUS BEGINNING FOR A NATIONAL POLITICAL ORGANIZATION. RELUCTANCE OF DELEGATES TO ENDORSE THEIR OWN UPPER HOUSE SLATES, AND OF HOA HAO TO FORMALLY ALIGN THEMSELVES WITH ORGANIZATION THEY HELPED TO CREATE UNDERMINES BLOC CREDENTIALS AS UNIFIED NATIONAL FRONT. HOWEVER, DESPITE PUBLIC HEDLING, BLOC DOES SEEM PREPARED TO WORK TOGETHER FOR LISTS 32, 33 AND 34 IN UPPER HOUSE ELECTION. DEGREE OF USEFUL SUPPORT BLOC WILL LEND TO THIEU-KY PRESIDENTIAL SLATE REMAINS TO BE SEEN.

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